Thad Cockrell & Roman Candle
"Christmas Time Is Here"
[Collector's Choice; 2006]
★★★★

Nothing about "Christmas Time Is Here" stands out except for everything, a tribute both to its subtlety and the eloquent, elliptical scenery Thad Cockrell and Roman Candle paint for a screenplay of sentiments: The drums are all snare rims and tambourines, the guitars are slight and soft, and the keyboards only augment the small steps of a slow waltz. Instead of playing up on the song, Roman Candle and Cockrell play completely to their imagery, letting the setting—falling snow, traveling friends, sleeping babies, loving parents—provide its own austerity.

Not that Cockrell's voice, this cuddly thing you can alwyas trust, doesn't have anything to do with it. Here, he swoons into a minor falsetto that never cracks, letting Skip Matheny meet him halfway. Both of these guys know the story of the season: Cockrell's dad is a preacher in Florida, and Roman Candle's Skip and Logan Matheny grew up in a church music program, their father a music minister for a healthy congregation in the North Carolina mountains. But, this season, they're here together, providing their own warm spirit as a salve to the cold season: "Everyone you see seems happy just to be / Christmas time is here."

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This is a focused excerpt of one entry from a multi-review batch page. For the full surrounding context (other Christmas indie reviews from the same Pitchfork digest), see the companion file christmas-time-is-here-track-review-2006-pitchfork-page.pdf or the verbatim christmas-time-is-here-track-review-source.html.